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A study of the influence of custom on the moral judgment

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Chapter II - Immediacy

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CHAPTER II

IMMEDIACY

The present chapter, as well as that which directly follows it, deals with the material supplied by the students of the College of Letters and Science. The methods employed with the members of the Short Course in Agriculture were in certain respects so different that that portion of the work must be reserved for separate treatment. We shall take up first the subject of immediacy, leaving for Chapter III the problem of the influence of authority.

The material now to be passed in review was obtained from members of the Sophomore, Junior, and Senior classes (the Juniors being greatly in the majority) who were at the time students in courses in elementary psychology and logic. The total membership in these courses was a little over two hundred. Of these ninety-three,—forty-five women and forty-eight men,—handed in written replies. To this number must be added ten more from the same courses, from whom I obtained replies under circumstances that will be described in the proper place. In February, 1906, two months later, a second set of questions was sent to these ninety-three students. Seventy-eight responded—thirty-five men and forty-three women. Altogether twenty-one questions were asked, of which only five directly concern us in this chapter.¹ All of these belonged to the first series. They dealt with respect for property, promises, truth, contracts, and life, and read as follows:

I. May a poor man without money, out of work, and unable at the time to find employment, take, without the knowledge of the owner, a loaf of bread from a baker's shop in order to save from starvation the young children of a neighbor? Their mother,

¹ The two sets of questions, in their entirety, will be found in the Appendix.

a widow, is sick in bed and unable for the time to earn money for their support, and the man himself is unable to get the bread in any other way.

II. A young man just graduated from college was hesitating between law and business. His tastes inclined him very strongly to the former; indeed the very idea of the latter alternative filled him with antipathy. But the young man's father had built up a large manufacturing business by his own unaided efforts and wished this, his only son, to carry it on after he himself should be compelled to give it up. Before the matter was decided the father fell sick. On his death-bed he obtained from his son a promise to abandon all thought of the law and devote his life to carrying on the business. The young man did as he promised, but although successful in the work, the longer he continued in it the more distasteful it grew, until he began to feel it positively unendurable. Under these circumstances would he be justified, after giving it a fair trial, say for a year or two, to abandon the business career and turn to the law?

III. Is it right to tell children that there is a Santa Claus?

IV. A university student hires a room for a year. After four weeks, when there is no longer any probability of its being taken by any one else, he leaves and goes to another room. Is this right under any of the following conditions? (1) He is lonely and wishes to go to a house several blocks away where some friends are lodging. (2) He is working his way through the university and an opportunity offers itself to get room-rent in return for an exceptionally small amount of service. He could earn enough to put himself through in other ways, but the change will save him two hours a day, which will enable him to do very much better university work. Does the answer to (1) or (2) differ if we suppose that: (a) his present room belongs to a man sufficiently well situated so that he and his family will not actually suffer at the loss of the rent; or (b) that it belongs to a widow with a young child and that she has no other means of support than the income from her rooms, representing let us say a net income of \$400 a year, which in case (1) will be reduced by \$60.00 and in (2) by \$30.00 if the lodger leaves.

V. Is it right for a physician, by administering an overdose of morphine or otherwise, to hasten by several weeks the death

of a patient hopelessly sick with cancer and suffering terrible torture all the time? Three cases may be distinguished: (1) It is done without the knowledge of the patient and his family; (2) it is done with the knowledge and consent of the family, but without the knowledge of the patient; (3) it is done at the request of the patient and with the consent of the family. Does the answer differ for the different cases?

Wherever they made any difference in the answer the following additions to I and II were made orally in the interviews. They are assumed in every answer that is counted.

I. The possibility of a later repayment whether by money or service may be ignored. The man who took the bread and the widow are Jews living in a Russian city in the latter part of 1905. They are preparing to flee from the country provided they can obtain help from relatives in America. In the midst of the anarchy then prevailing they can not look forward with any confidence to getting track of the baker again.

II. The son is well aware that the father blinded by his desire to have the business remain in the family, would not, if alive, release him from his promise.

The answers received fall into two classes which I shall call the latitudinarian and the rigoristic, respectively. These terms are not intended to be dyslogistic or eulogistic but to indicate certain facts. The latitudinarian answers are those which in the case under consideration permit or demand an exception to the general rule of respect for property, truth, *et cetera*. The rigoristic answers are those which stand for obedience to the rule. In IV and V where several different conditions are enumerated I shall call an answer latitudinarian when it permits a breach of the rule under any of the circumstances described. A presentation of typical answers follows.

LATITUDINARIAN ANSWERS

I. a. He is perfectly justified to take the bread without the baker's knowledge. Because he would be injuring no one, not even himself, if he took the bread to prevent starvation which could not be prevented in any other way.

b. I think that the poor man was justified in taking the bread under these circumstances. He would be doing an infinitely large amount of good compared to the trivial harm done, and he would be doing the good by the only possible method open to him.

c. If stealing was his only means of warding off starvation, I would consider his action justifiable. The unselfish motive of the man justifies him morally.

II. a. This young man is justified in returning to law, because the promise exacted on the death-bed was not fair. It is not right that the life of the young man should be made miserable because of the hobby of the father. The young man has the right to enjoy life as well as his father has.

b. I think the young man would be justified to abandon the business career because he would spoil the happiness of the best part of his life if he should continue the business; whereas if he should give it up he would not mar his father's life, since the latter is dead.

c. He would be justified in leaving the business. As long as he found the work distasteful to him he would never accomplish much. A person can only do the best things for himself and society when he is engaged in work that he can put his heart and soul into.

III. a. It is right to tell children that there is a Santa Claus, because they obtain enjoyment that they otherwise would not. In fact I think it wrong to deprive them of all of this enjoyment. [A statement like that of the second sentence appears altogether no less than four times.]

b. I think perhaps children get a little more enjoyment out of Christmas because of their belief in regard to Santa Claus, and I don't believe that the deceit practiced has any influence in forming habits of deceit in the child. There seem to be cases here and there where the child has lost some confidence in the parents' truthfulness through the deception, but I think they are exceptional cases.

c. Yes. The telling of such a myth does not injure the moral sensibility of either parent or child, and stimulates the imagination of the child, if nothing more.

IV. a. Under condition (1) he would not have been justified,

because he ought to have foreseen what the results would be, and then the results are of no great importance. Under condition (2a) he might leave the place because the benefit to the student would be greater than the loss to the landlord. Case (2b) is different. There the widow is actually depending upon room rent for support, while the change of rooms will only make things more convenient for the student. Therefore it would be wrong for the student to leave the widow in the lurch.

b. If it is just to keep himself from being lonely, the student is not justified in leaving the room, whether the landlord or landlady be comfortably situated financially or not. It is selfishness on his part to make others suffer just to make himself more comfortable. It takes just a little exertion on his part to drive away this loneliness without making the owner of the house suffer for it. Under second conditions mentioned, where he works his way through college, he is justified in leaving his room, irrespective of the financial circumstances of the owner. He would never get ahead if he were to look out for the good of everyone else.

V. a. The physician *has* a right to hasten the death of the patient as he would thereby benefit both the patient and his family, relieving him and his family of unnecessary pain and suffering, and not harming anyone thereby. This holds especially in cases (2) and (3).

RIGORISTIC ANSWERS

I. d. No. A person has no right to steal anything, no matter what the value of the article is and no matter what excuse he has. If we say that it was right in this case, where is the line to be drawn? The next person might steal a coat to keep his wife from freezing, *et cetera*, until he stole money. If he is not to consider that wrong he will go on and on without limit.

II. d. No. The son should have stuck to his promise for the sake of the father he loved.

e. No, the young man would not be justifiable in going back on his promise. A promise is a promise, and he should not have made a promise so intimately concerning his entire life until he had carefully and exhaustively considered the subject, and had

made up his mind to keep his promise for better or worse. A promise would soon cease to be of any value, if anyone could break it under even very good reasons.

III. d. Experience leads me to say no. The pleasure in believing there is a Santa Claus does not offset the disappointment of being disillusioned. Christmas can be made pleasurable and significant by other means, without misrepresentation.

e. I do not think that children ought to be made to believe in a Santa Claus. I believed in the story myself until I was about thirteen years old. When I found out it was not true I was very greatly disappointed. I remember distinctly that it was the first time I had any reason to doubt the truth of what my parents said. For some time afterward I would not trust them at all, and it was only after my grief in finding there was no Santa Claus had worn away that I again placed my confidence in them. I take great pleasure in all fairy tales and fables without believing in them and I think a child could have just as much pleasure without the pain.

f. No. It is not right, because it raises false hopes in the child, and when he discovers that there is no such person he awakes to the realization that his parents have been lying to him, and he begins to feel that it will be all right for him to tell falsehoods too because his parents have told him falsehoods, and thus we have him going astray, and it may be the first beginning of a life of deceit and crime.

IV. c. Under none of the conditions described has the student a right to give up his room. The bottom would drop out of everything if you commenced to permit any contracts to be broken.

d. If the student has agreed to occupy the room for a certain specified time it is his duty to live up to his bargain provided that by not doing so he will injure the other party.

V. b. In no case should the physician administer an overdose of morphine. It would be minimizing the sacredness of human life, which it has taken centuries of Christianity to enlarge and establish, and would open the way for, would be a precedent for evils untold, for the future.

c. I do not think it would be right under any circumstances to take a person's life before the appointed time. If a Supreme

Power exists, and it places those sufferings on a person, it must be for the best, and therefore the person is not justified in taking his life away. If he does not believe in a future life he would be perfectly in the right in ending his sufferings as soon as possible.

d. I do not think that it is right under any conditions to hasten death, because any sickness that we may have is the result of our own wrongs, and we are destined to a certain amount of punishment for it by divine plan. Therefore it is not right to interrupt this plan.

As the most cursory examination of these answers will show, all, with the possible exception of the last one, are indubitable examples of the use of the eudaemonistic standard. The last is also, if the purpose of God in punishing is regarded as educative. As a matter of fact this purpose is probably conceived as retributive, and thus the standard is what may be called dysdaemonistic, *i. e.*, the action is judged right because it aims to harm the person affected. For purposes of convenience in presentation, however, since it will make no difference in our conclusions, I shall assume that the first mentioned hypothesis is the true one, thus reducing all the answers to a single class. That such answers can be found among a hundred university students, should occasion no surprise. The real problem of the chapter is, how many of them conform to these types?

In presenting the data collected on this subject, I must premise that in the following no answer is counted as eudaemonistic unless it rises to the standards of clearness and distinctness exhibited in the preceding illustrations. In other words, in the eudaemonistic answers, as the term will be used in this study, the relation of the conduct to welfare is explicitly stated, in one way or another, to be the basis of the judgment; "eudaemonistic" is here *demonstrably eudaemonistic*. "Non-eudaemonistic" (or more broadly "non-mediated") simply means that the reply does not rise to this standard of definiteness; it leaves the question of the actual use of the eudaemonistic standard an open one. "Immediate," finally, applied to a judgment, means that it was really formed without conscious reference to the relation of the action to welfare.

The answers that supply the subject matter of our study were found for the most part, in the written papers, but a small proportion, about fifteen per cent., were obtained through interviews. No answer classified as eudaemonistic, however, was gained in response to leading questions of any kind on my part. I must add that in all enumerations of eudaemonistic answers (as in the paragraph just below), only answers to the five printed questions are counted; so that the answers to various supplementary questions employed, at times, in the interviews, are not used to swell totals.

The total number of students who handed in written replies was ninety-three. They may be divided for our present purpose into two groups. Group I consists of those who supplied three or more eudaemonistic answers, written or oral, in the sense of the term just explained. Group II, naturally, contains the remainder.

The total number of persons in Group I is seventy-five,—thirty-nine women and thirty-six men—or eighty per cent. of the whole. The total number of eudaemonistic answers received from them is two hundred and eighty-four. The accompanying table gives the details.

	Women	Men	Total
Three eudaemonistic answers	18	15	33
Four eudaemonistic answers	15	10	25
Five eudaemonistic answers	6	11	17

There remain eighty-four answers unaccounted for.² Of these eight, written by six persons, were studied with some care and will be taken up *seriatim* later. The others, seventy-six in number, were not followed up, and their character, in so far forth might be said to be unknown. For the answer that merely neglects to state the relation to welfare and that which takes its character from a failure to see it, look outwardly alike. However, a certain general consideration may help us to form a pretty definite opinion as to the probability of immediate answers being concealed in this unexplored territory.

This consideration is the principle that immediacy is to be

² In seven instances either the answer was omitted or the question misunderstood.

looked for rather in the rigoristic than in the latitudinarian answers. The grounds for this assertion are obvious. According to the theory under examination, common sense morality has its source in an unthinking adherence to general rules. It would follow, therefore, that where the breach of a rule is approved, the person is standing upon his own feet, thinking for himself, except where public opinion notoriously sanctions the breach. This, for our questions, is true only of the third. *A priori*, therefore, we should not expect to find any examples of immediacy in the latitudinarian answers to questions I, II, IV, and V. This conclusion is fortified by the fact that in the course of our examination of several hundred latitudinarian answers among the "Hill" and the Agricultural students, not a single one was discovered that could urge even a *prima facie* claim to immediacy.

If immediacy is to be a property only of our rigoristic answers, the problem of the unexamined remainder becomes a simple one. For of the seventy-six answers in Group I which were not subjected to an investigation, only sixteen are rigoristic. But even this is not the last word. The probability against concealed immediacy even in this small group is reduced to a minimum by the distribution of these answers. Eleven of them are the sole non-mediated rigoristic answers in their respective papers. This state of things, of course, did not come about by chance. It was due to the employment of the interview as a supplement to the written returns. The interview, I may say in parenthesis, was used, in this department of the investigation, primarily for two purposes, one of which partially included the other. One was the examination of those persons whose paper contained less than three eudaemonistic answers, whether rigoristic or latitudinarian. The second was the examination of the rigoristic non-eudaemonistic answers. At the outset I had planned to thus examine every answer of the second kind. In the end, however, this appeared unnecessary, and I decided to content myself with an examination of those papers in which two or more of them appeared. This program was carried so far towards completion that in Group I but three papers remain which contain more than one rigoristic non-mediated answer.

Consider what this statement means. Here we have in the

first place seventeen persons (see page 28) who, without hint or other suggestion from the investigator, have five times explicitly based their approbation or condemnation upon the value of the action in terms of the welfare of those affected. Here, furthermore, are fifty-eight who have done the same thing for at least three times, and in the fourth have given either a eudaemonistic answer again, or a latitudinarian answer which, as we have seen, is practically its equivalent. If, then, the fifth answer be an unexamined rigoristic one, what is the probability that it is immediate? There might, of course, be a stray case or two, but anything beyond that is almost inconceivable.

Even in the three papers that contain two unexamined rigoristic answers the chances of immediacy are very remote. In one case the second rigoristic answer belongs to the group of eight which have been set aside for later examination (see below, page 37). I think we shall conclude that it is at bottom eudaemonistic. In the other two papers, one of the two rigoristic answers was in each case at first classified as eudaemonistic. They lost their position in this class as a result of my screwing up a peg higher the standards of admission, but that they are really immediate is extremely improbable. I may add that in the case of several of the non-mediated rigoristic answers referred to in the preceding paragraph, indications afforded by the answer itself point almost unmistakably to the use of the eudaemonistic standard.

In view of all these facts I conclude that while it is possible that a very few answers with a *prima facie* claim to immediacy may be concealed in the unexplored territory of Group I, their number must be, at most, insignificant.

Group II consists of those who gave less than three (demonstrably) eudaemonistic answers, written or oral. Its members fall into two sub-groups. The larger, fourteen in number, consists of those with whom no attempt was made to go beyond the returns contained in the papers. No one of these papers contained more than one non-mediated rigoristic answer, five of them contained none at all. In view of this fact and in view of the results obtained from Group I, farther examination seemed unnecessary.

The remaining four demand individual attention. I shall

refer to each by the number of his paper as it appears in my list.³

43. Two eudaemonistic answers: III, latitudinarian; V, rigoristic of the type illustrated under V c. I, II, and IV, are rigoristic. In the interview I asked her a number of supplementary questions, about half of those which will be found in Chapter IV, page 65 ff. In almost every case the answer was rigoristic. I then inquired for the reasons for her attitude. In answering I:5 (see page 67) she had said in explanation of her rigorism: "If you once permit stealing it is impossible to draw the line." Following up this clue I inquired whether it was the difficulty of drawing the line that had determined her attitude. She replied that it was, both in the oral questions I had just put before her, and in the written answers to I, II, and IV. She insisted with great positiveness that this consideration had been clearly in her mind and had been the determining factor in her judgment when writing out the answers. In order to see whether she was merely following my lead I placed the question about drawing the line in the midst of a series of leading questions as to the reasons for assuming the rigoristic attitude.⁴ She asserted that the others had not occurred to her. 43, then, supplies no immediate answers. I, II, and IV are indeed not "eudaemonistic" in the narrow sense in which I am using the term in this study, because the ground on which they are based was discovered in the process of asking supplementary casuistry problems (see page 28) and then, more comprehensively, as the result of a leading question on my part. But they are none the less based upon the eudaemonistic standard.

140. My report on this student is unsatisfactory, because the investigation itself was incomplete. This in turn was due partly to lack of time, partly, it would seem, to a failure of my mental machinery to work. Answers to III and V are mediated latitudinarian. The answer to I will be considered later in connection with the eight answers left over from Group I. IV was non-mediated and rigoristic. There was no time to take it up

³In this chapter and the chapters following numbers 1-52 are women, and 101-151 are men in the College of Letters and Science; 201-250 are students in the Agricultural College.

⁴These reasons are enumerated in chapter IV, p. 70. For convenience of reference, they have also been placed in the Appendix, page 144.

in the interview; the reader may therefore classify it to suit himself. II. The written answer read: "A promise should be kept by all means. If the young man knew that he did not like the business as well as law and would not perhaps stick to the business if he did try it, he should not have made the promise. He knew that he would not get the most out of life nor would it be pleasant for him if he followed work which he despised." I tried to get his point of view by asking questions II 1a and b and II 4 (see pages 67 and 68). In each instance he replied: **Break the promise.** Then I inquired what the difference was between these cases and the promise made to the dying father. He tried to find a difference but could not. Thereupon he at first said he felt differently about them anyway, appearing inclined to stick to each decision; then without warning he went definitely over to the other side and declared he would change his answer to the written question. I suggested there was one real difference between the two sets of cases; in the questions of the interview the promise was broken in order to help another person, while in the printed question it was broken for the promiser's own advantage. However, he said this made no difference in his opinion. The original answer to this question, I am inclined to believe, is based upon the same grounds as that of d quoted above, (page 25) reinforced, perhaps, by the feeling, frequently expressed, that a promise to the dead is more binding than one to the living. The answers to the two oral questions are doubtless eudaemonistic in source, and the final answer to the printed question is undoubtedly derived from these by analogy. But this hypothesis, unfortunately, was not verified.

136. His answer to V will be found above, page 27, as V. d. The other four were rigoristic also, no grounds being assigned. The method of investigation pursued was the same as with 43, and the results were precisely the same.

137. All answers are non-eudaemonistic and rigoristic. We had one interview in which I assured myself by means of the supplementary questions already referred to and in other ways that he was thoroughly rigoristic—the most uncompromisingly so of anyone in the entire number. I also determined that he was not guided by any of the considerations listed in the Appendix, which have been already referred to. Only one of those I

mentioned had appealed to him—admiration for the man who takes a position and sticks to it without compromise. He is, he told me, a great admirer of John Quincy Adams, whose life he is well acquainted with, and the doughty old warrior's stand for principle has had much influence upon him. Beyond this point we were unable to go that day for lack of time. It was my desire to have a second interview, but that proved impossible. As he did not answer the questions of February, 1906, I was left without farther light on the problem. While then it seems probable that he is, in part at least, a representative of the aesthetic type; and while any possible remainder can be explained in several different ways in the light of the results obtained from certain of the Agricultural students, I should prefer to reserve a decision in his case and mark the answer "Incomplete."

For Group II, then, we have the following results. Nowhere does positive evidence of immediacy appear, unless it be in 140, I, which is reserved for later examination. All the positive evidence there is, is decidedly against the existence of immediacy. 140, II and IV and 137 are interesting cases unfortunately left incomplete. Combining our findings with those for Group I we can summarize in the statement that in ninety-three papers the only chances for immediacy are narrowed down to a few sporadic answers.

It may be urged, however, that any attempt to draw broad conclusions from these data would be unjustifiable. For it may be that they do not represent the average student faithfully. These young women and men were requested to give reasons for their answers wherever possible. No special emphasis was placed upon this request. Nevertheless it may be objected that the hundred and ten or more members of these classes who handed in no replies consisted largely or entirely of those who found themselves unable to assign reasons for their decisions; and that it was precisely this fact that deterred them from writing the desired paper.

In order to decide this matter, I appeared before the classes a second time and told them that the main purpose of my investigation was to discover how far people are aware of the reasons for their judgments of right and wrong; and that in order to solve this problem it was necessary now to know how many had

failed to hand in written replies because of inability to assign grounds for them. Those of whom this was true were accordingly requested to make a written statement to that effect. In response to this request eleven statements were received. One was unsigned; the writers of the others, seven women and three men, I proceeded to interview. Here, if anywhere, should be our blind worshipers of the powers that be. As a matter of fact they differed in no respect from the students already examined. Indeed there were only two persons who even claimed inability to assign reasons for any of the answers. One of these wrote: "I could answer most of the questions, but could not give reasons. I just felt that they were right or wrong." The other eight said either that there were certain questions for which they could find no reasons (one in number), or no reasons that satisfied them (three), or else that they had failed to hand in a paper because of certain questions which they could not decide (four). The inability of this last group to come to a decision turned out, upon investigation, to be due in every case not to paucity but to multiplicity of reasons, between the conflicting claims of which they had been unable to find a resting-place. The three who were not satisfied with their reasons seem merely to have been afraid that *I* would not find the reasons satisfactory; the "certain questions" for which one person could find no reasons were questions outside of the set that we have been studying, and of an entirely different nature.

This is a rather discouraging showing for the searcher after immediacy. But there is worse to come. Even the two young women upon whom he has been feeling he could depend are to prove faithless or partly faithless. The evidence is clear. 51, who "just felt that they were right or wrong" has two plainly eudaemonistic answers, and three that are open to discussion. The former are III and V. III she declared herself in the interview unable to decide: "On the one hand there is the pleasure of the children; on the other the loss of faith in the parents." She distinctly remembered that these were her reasons when the printed questions were before her and she offered circumstantial evidence to verify her assertion. In V (1) and (2) she thinks it would be wrong to give the morphine; but in (3) it would be right because it would be merciful to relieve him of

his sufferings. The answer to I must be left for the next chapter. II and IV go to join the little group that has been awaiting our attention for some time. 51 has really done very little to help the cause, but the contributions of 46 are zero. She made indeed a promising start, answering all the five questions, in the interview, in thorough-going rigoristic fashion. When, however, I asked her if she could tell me her reason for being so strict she had no difficulty in doing so whatever. "If you allow yourself one exception, why not others? till you could in the end allow yourself anything." "But why not allow yourself anything?" I inquired. "Because then society would go to pieces," was the reply. She affirmed in the most positive manner that both these ideas were before her mind clearly when the questions were given her in December, and that she had applied them in deciding upon the answers. She had failed to hand in her paper because she did not understand what I meant by asking for reasons. A reason to her mind evidently meant something very profound and remote.

It appears then that our ninety-three students were thoroughly representative after all. The only problem that remains is whether there is any immediacy discoverable at all. To solve this we take up the answers, whose number has now grown to eleven, which from time to time we have been setting aside for detailed examination.

Before entering upon this, however, it will be necessary for us to become acquainted with a form of the eudaemonistic judgment which we have not as yet met in the course of this investigation. It is due to the demand which common sense makes that its moral judgments be consistent. This demand is involved in the very meaning of the word "right." It does not come primarily from the philosopher as such, it will be equally insisted upon by the veriest Philistine, innocent of all reflection upon the deeper problems of conduct. Where two moral judgments appear to contradict each other he recognizes, in the abstract at least, that one or both must be modified. For the same reason, in deciding complicated questions, as that of "tainted money," he usually starts from some maxim regarded as beyond the reach of criticism, and argues from what is logically involved therein to the mode of conduct that shall prove to be worthy of

approbation. This method of procedure will normally lead to satisfactory results if the starting-point is proof against criticism. But a single flaw in the reasoning, more particularly the acceptance as a premise of a universal proposition which is valid only under certain conditions will yield results which are not only erroneous but are in some cases apparently impossible to trace to the standard from which the judgment actually started.

Just what is meant by this last statement will appear from an illustration taken from the sphere of what is commonly ranked as prudence rather than morality. In his *Psychology of the Religious Experience*, page 68, Professor Coe reproduces the confession of a farmer boy who once heard and took to heart that excellent maxim: "Whatever is worth doing is worth doing well." Using this as a principle of universal application, when he was running the reaping machine he would stop his team and go carefully back upon his course to pull up every wisp of grain that the machine missed. Before he discovered the error of his way he had rendered his life almost unendurable. Obviously he looked at the situation in the light of a general principle which, because of circumstances that escaped his attention, did not apply in this case; and he reacted with emotions appropriate to the abstract principle.

The following is an example of the same thing from the field of the moral judgment. Among the questions given to the "Hill" students was the following: A century or more ago a shipload of people were wrecked upon a desert island in the Pacific far from all trade routes. There they and their descendants lived for many years, unvisited by other men, until finally a ship appeared and carried them away to Europe. At that time there was in their prison a man who had just been sentenced to be hung for murder. Is the community, before breaking up, its members to scatter to different parts of the world, bound to hang this murderer or are they at liberty to set him free? It being assumed that while the murder was in every respect unjustifiable, it was committed under circumstances which give no grounds for the fear that the murderer, if freed, would ever commit another similar crime.

To this there was received, among others, the following written answer: "The breaking up of the community does not

change the status of the murderer, and the people are just as much bound as ever to hang him." In order to determine the exact source of this judgment I followed up the reply by means of an interview the substance of which follows. I must, however, premise before quoting that while his statements were in the form of answers to my questions, none of these was in any possible sense of the term a leading question. The young man said: "I recognize two reasons for punishing a murderer: as a warning to others, and to keep that same man from doing it again. I was perfectly willing to believe that a man might commit a deliberate and unjustifiable murder, for which he would be hung, under such circumstances that there was no probability that he would do it again. The reason why I answered as I did in my paper was that I thought the first reason still held: he did something for which he ought to be hung and the fact that the community was going to scatter did not seem to me to have anything to do with the question of his punishment." Thereupon I inquired whether if the community broke up and its government ceased to exist, its members scattering to become the subjects of new governments, the first reason for punishment still held. To this he replied: "Now that you ask me I see that it does not and I should reverse my written answer." This was by no means an isolated instance. Out of eighty-seven unequivocal replies sixteen exhibited this fallacy. It was possible to show some of the students that their conclusion did not follow from the premises; but others could not be made to see it, even after the expenditure on my part of considerable effort. A judgment of this kind I shall call pseudo-eudaemonistic.

After this excursus we are now prepared to take up the cases that have been reserved for special examination. The first shall be number V of paper 120. The answers to I and II in this paper are mediated latitudinarian, and of III, mediated rigoristic. IV I am unable to pass upon. I made an attempt to get at its foundation in the interview, got off on a wrong track, and in the end discovered nothing. The written answer to V reads: "Wrong in every instance. 'Tis not right to destroy life except to save it." His oral explanation in the interview, elicited by questions, but not leading questions, and given (of course with necessary compression) mainly in his own words,

was as follows: "Life is sacred because its beginning and end are shrouded in mystery. Therefore it is something that we ought not to tamper with." The answer to c and d on pages 26 and 27 do not represent what he means. He found the question very difficult to answer for he knew of a case which though not exactly the same, was somewhat like this, and he had more than once asked himself: "What purpose is served by letting this person live?" However, he always came back to the conclusion stated above. This view "is the outgrowth of my religious life. God has many attributes of which we know nothing. Of others we only know that they exist, not their nature. Life is one of these latter. Therefore we must not decide when it shall end." The binding force of the preceding "therefores" is a little hard to see. But answers to other questions may perhaps throw some light upon it. In the first place I think we may feel certain that his answer is not immediate. It is difficult to conceive of immediacy in dealing with a problem like this on the part of a man who sums up his conclusion with regard to I in the following (written) words: "Within custom and law the welfare of men may be expected to be secured; when it is not, then it may be sought without the bounds of convention." Immediacy becomes still more difficult to suppose when we remember that, brought face to face with a problem of this kind in actual life he had repeatedly asked himself, what purpose is served by letting this person live? In the second place we get some positive help from his answer to XI of Series II, (see Appendix) written before this interview: "Life is sacred and not ours except to live for men. Clerk or clergyman, we live not for ourselves or our own—but for character, our own character and our neighbor's character both of physical and moral life." This answer and the answer to I supply the keynote (more than once repeated) of all his written and oral answers in both the first and second series. With this clue his general position with regard to V seems not hard to understand. In a universe of mystery, man has no right to take it upon himself to determine when the possibilities of character development that are placed in his hands, are exhausted. What is this but thoroughly self-conscious eudaemonism of the perfectionistic type? Some phases of his thinking may not be entirely

cleared up by this explanation, but any perfectly clean-cut formula would undoubtedly misrepresent his thought.

V of 44. I, III, and IV are mediated, the first rigoristic, the ground being that it is dangerous to start stealing, though she admits that she was at first carried away by her sympathies to the opposite conclusion. II is latitudinarian and essentially eudaemonistic though not rising quite to the standard here set for admission to that class. Supplementary oral questions on I show a thorough-going and on the whole discriminating use of the eudaemonistic standard. V was a very real question to her for she knew intimately of a pitiful case of cancer like that here described. The patient was abandoned by his family before the last stages of the disease had been reached, and he was thrown upon charity. He was sent first to a private, then to a public hospital, where after much suffering he died. Her written answer is: "It is wrong in every case. No physician has the right to cut off a human life." She was not able to formulate, in the interview, her reasons with perfect definiteness, but they are religious in character. The point of view is not that of c or d of pages 26 and 27; neither is it that of 120, just studied. It is rather that life is a gift which God has given us, for which reason we ought not to destroy it. Anything more definite than this was not elicited, as I did not ask leading questions. But apparently the half-formulated thought in her mind is: To destroy a life is to say that it is valueless. But it can't be that, because it is the gift of God. Mingled with this may well be the belief that to declare a life valueless is to insult God by supposing that He does not know when to give and when to take away.

I of 39. II, III, and IV are latitudinarian and mediated; V is rigoristic and mediated, of the type of c, page 26. The written answer to I is: "The act would be stealing, and that, whether it be a little matter of a loaf of bread, or a big matter of an individual or corporation stealing from the public, is wrong morally." In the interview she gave the same answer to the question I 6 (see below, page 67); but in I 3b (page 66) she thought it unnecessary to return the shoes at so much labor because the sister probably would not use them. The reasons for her answer were not any of the reasons for the observance of general rules enumerated in the Appendix. She was unable to assign the rea-

son but declared she felt that everyone has a standard in his own mind and that if he drops below this he injures the purity of his character. Why the standard forbade stealing to save a life she was unable to say. This may perhaps be a real case of immediacy. On the other hand Series II contains two such flagrant examples (as it seems to me) of the pseudo-eudaemonistic judgment that I find it hard to believe that this may not be another case of the same thing. The questions are I and II of Series II.⁵ Her answer in each case was, Enforce the law. In the interview she said in explanation that the two problems seemed to her identical. In II she would not think less of the Chinese merchant for trying to get through, but the *officials* in each case had a duty to perform. The difficulty of drawing the line did not occur to her, she declared in answer to my question, though the danger of setting a bad example did, but it was not the determining factor. Laws are not binding except as they are for the good of those who live under them, but these were good laws and the officials were set there to enforce them. Therefore they ought to enforce them. A similar use of the principle, Private property is necessary for the existence of society and therefore all should unite in its protection, would, taken abstractly, yield the result that we find here. The difficulty, why this fallacy appears in I and not in the following answers, is one that any explanation would have to face. It might easily have been some observation or experience, which in its concreteness had disappeared from memory; it might have been a multiplicity of observations. This, of course, is pure speculation. But in the end the fact remains, whatever its significance, that a too abstract use of the eudaemonistic standard will explain this judgment and that the young woman has apparently been guilty of just this abstract thinking in dealing with two other questions.

IV in paper 135. I, II, and V are latitudinarian and mediated, III is rigoristic and mediated. The written answer to IV is: "In case one he does commit a wrong. No reasons. In case two he also commits a wrong. Doubtful. The suppositions (a) and (b) do not make any difference, he does a moral wrong in both cases. That is, I do not believe that the moral wrong is any different in either case. It seems self-evident that he does a moral wrong."

⁵ See Appendix, page 139.

In the interview he declared that the statements accompanying his decisions in this answer described with exactness his state of mind at the time of writing. No reason came to his mind in answering this question. The minute he read it, it seemed to him self-evident that the student was bound to remain. Other problems concerning contracts were then given him, distinctly more puzzling than this. All were answered in the same way. Thereupon I inquired as to the reason for his position, enumerating those stated in the Appendix. Only one of these had he ever used (as far as he could remember) in deciding moral questions, and that was, the difficulty of drawing the line. This he had often thought of and often used. However, it was not in his mind in answering IV. That simply came to him at once as the right answer. However, as he went down the list of printed questions it did occur to him (though it was never a deciding factor). This case seems to differ from 43 and 136 (see above, pages 31 and 32) in one respect only; the principle habitually used in deciding this class of problems was in this particular instance not present in the mind of the person answering. This is, indeed, immediacy. But taking all the facts into consideration it does not look like the kind of immediacy demanded by the custom theory. "I answered these questions instantly," he declared at the close of the interview, referring of course to the printed questions, "as soon as I had read them over carefully enough to understand them. It took no longer to answer them than to get the answer down upon the paper. I always take sides at once [*i. e.*, in all practical affairs] and always know at once what I consider right or wrong." A person whose mind works as rapidly as this can not and need not have his reasons all spread out before him whenever he is called upon to deal with matters of conduct whether moral or prudential. He recognizes that this is one of a set of cases which he always decides in a certain way, and then he dismisses the subject from his mind. But if we can trust his statements in the interview, we shall not suppose that these decisions are without a foundation in his own thinking. From time to time he has seen the danger of breaking general rules and has adopted the maxims appropriate to this perception.⁶

⁶ Cf. above, page 15.

The possibility of having even an articulated system of rational principles in one's possession (something undoubtedly quite beyond what took place in 135), and yet letting them drop into temporary oblivescence in solving problems of conduct was expressly affirmed by 22. She had answered II in her paper thus: "One of our faculty says, 'The secret of happiness lies in liking what we have to do, not in doing what we like.' I think the young man could learn to like his business, especially if (as the problem states) he was successful. The conviction of its being unendurable likely grew out of pondering his sacrificial plans." In the interview she said she would have approved of his breaking his promise for some reasons but this one did not seem to her important enough. On my inquiring whether she had had before her mind the reasons that made the keeping of promises important she replied, "Not clearly, but they were there subconsciously." Asked for the grounds of this assertion she replied: "I had an ethical creed—a rather mixed one—worked out before I ever saw these questions. It shows itself clearly in I, and led me to balance gain and loss in all these questions." But in II, and, as it further appeared, also in IV, the exact nature of the gain involved in loyalty to promises and contracts was not clearly present in consciousness.

II and IV of 8. The answers to I, III, and V were latitudinarian and mediated. The answers not merely to II and IV but also (in the interview) to several supplementary questions on promises similar to and in part identical with those under II, on pages 67 and 68 were uncompromisingly rigoristic. In fact after II 5 she volunteered the sweeping statement that no promise, except one obtained by force, should be broken. My efforts in the interview were directed mainly to discovering the reasons for the difference in her attitude in these two sets of cases. In the first place her reason for rigorism was not any of those in the list of the Appendix. It was rather that in making a promise or contract a person takes, or may take, into consideration the various consequences and having accepted them voluntarily must stand by them. The æsthetic standard seems here to be speaking, demanding that a man shall be "man enough" to do what he has once resolved to do. Pseudo-eudaemonism

may well be present also, because, in the first place, as will appear immediately, she knows well enough that the claim of the promisee depends upon the existence of a desire which the promise will satisfy, and in the second place, she is guilty of a fallacy of the pseudo-eudaemonistic judgment in II of Series II, like 39.⁷ But suppose the promisee is injured by faithfulness to the promise, as in II 1 a and b? He is getting what he wanted. *Injuria non fit volenti*, she would doubtless have said had she ever heard of the maxim. That these principles really coexisted in her mind with a clear-eyed eudaemonism seems to be shown from the following conversation with which (after having put the supplementary questions on promises referred to above) the interview practically opened. "Why," I inquired, "are you so severe in II with the young man, while in I you allow the man to steal?" The question in this form she waived aside, and answered: "I do not see that it is right for a person to let anyone die for want of food, when it can be obtained. I have read at different times in the newspapers of persons helping themselves under conditions like these and have always thought it right. Of course I should not think it right for him to take it from others, if they would suffer by it, but only from those who have abundance." "How does this differ from killing a man, or risking killing him, for the sake of keeping a promise?" This gave her a moment's pause. Then she said: "I suppose he wanted to know; so he ought to be told." "If then we must be so particular about our promises, why do you think it right to make children believe in Santa Claus?" "I can not see any harm in it; it gives children pleasure; it gave me pleasure, at least, in my childhood." Neither in II then, nor in IV, which for her was identical in principle with II, can I discover any of the immediacy which the custom theory demands.

The same is true of 51, II and IV. Her point of view is in essence identical with that just analyzed. The details indeed differ, but the differences are so superficial that it would be wearisome and useless to describe our interview. She is the young woman mentioned above, page 34. We can see how she could say of these two questions at any rate with a fair

⁷ See above, page 40.

approximation to accuracy: "I could not give reasons [for my answers]. I just felt that they were right or wrong;" and yet how, none the less, immediacy might be absent.

I in 140 (see above, page 31). Supplementary questions I 3b and 6 (of pages 66 and 67) were asked in the interview. He answered both rigoristically, but the former only after considerable hesitation, and with the air of one who is doing something because he is forced to do it, and of which he ought to be ashamed. To get at the grounds of his opinion I ran through the list of possible reasons so often referred to in this part of our study, none of them had been in his mind in formulating either the written answer or the oral ones. He judged strictly in these matters, he said, because he felt the actions we were discussing injured character. The other questions, as II and V, he told me, had required a good deal of thought, but this had emerged at once of itself without any particular thought about reasons beyond the fact that it was wrong to steal anything small as well as big. This fact had been impressed upon him by seeing people ride on the street cars without paying the fare when the conductor overlooked them.

I shall not attempt to take any definite position with regard to this case because of absence of data. The hesitation and shamefacedness with which he answered question I 3b exhibit indeed that latent conception of the relation of morality to values, which this investigation has lead me to believe is never absent from the moral judgment. The reference to character may mean a still more definite conception of the relation of morality to values or it may not. Aesthetic factors, however, are almost certain to enter into such an estimate of character, and there is always the possibility also that, unknown to the man himself, the same may be true of the utilitarian values that depend upon the indirect effects of actions. No one can have failed to observe in specific cases the harm done by the departure from the general rules of conduct, and generalization of such observations may go on outside of the focus of consciousness. These generalizations may then, as we have seen, be applied far beyond their legitimate boundaries as the result of abstract thinking. These facts are perfectly capable of explaining the judgment under examination. But these are possibilities that are rather suggested by the results

obtained from this entire study than by anything contained in our immediate data.

I and IV of 129. II, III, and V are latitudinarian and mediated. The last is quoted as V. a on page 25 above. On my repeating question I in the interview he replied: "This can be looked at in two ways. If I say what I feel, he should not steal, but I can not give any reason for it. If I reason it out I should call it all right. For he saves his life and the lives of others and does no particular harm." He felt much perplexed, but in the end, though somewhat doubtfully, reaffirmed the rigoristic answer of his paper. I asked questions I 6 and I 3 b. The former he answered rigoristically; in the latter he thought it unnecessary to return the shoes because they were not worth the trouble it would cost. I pointed out to him that his answers to I and IV were more rigorous than those of most people would be and asked if he could assign any reasons for these answers. He was unable to do so. I then enumerated the various possible eudaemonistic reasons. He recognized none of them as his own. Of one he said it was a good reason but it had had nothing to do with determining his answer. The authority of the Bible was declared to play no rôle whatever. Here the interview closed.

As in the preceding case the data supplied by paper and interview are not sufficient to warrant us in asserting a positive conclusion. But again I can not refrain from pointing out that a very simple hypothesis is capable of explaining all the facts. I and IV are both, from one point of view, problems of property; and respect for property our student sees derives its obligatoriness from the fact that property has value (as is shown by the answer to I 3 b). Now suppose this young man (who is the son of wealthy parents) looks at these problems solely from the point of view of the property owner. Suppose also that, rating the demands of charity rather low, he conceives that the baker is under no obligation to supply the bread even if asked for it, or the landlord to release his tenant from the contract under any of the conditions mentioned. Then if he recognizes clearly or dimly that rights and duties are correlative, as many of our students implicitly do, especially in the answers to II,—if he recognizes, in other words, that A's rights against B are only B's duties towards A, he

could reach no other conclusion than the one he stated—and that without any mental process which he would be likely to call reasoning. Whether this represents the actual course of his thoughts I will not undertake to decide.

My conclusions with regard to these eight students may be summarized as follows: 120 and 44 seem almost certainly to be using in V the eudaemonistic standard. II and IV in 8 and 51 seem eudaemonistic with about equal certainty, the peculiarities of their reports being explained by the exceptional valuation placed upon the given word, a valuation of perhaps mixed aesthetic and eudaemonistic origin. I in 39 may be immediate, but, even if the student's record is considered as an isolated phenomenon, the chances are at least equal that it is pseudo-eudaemonistic. IV in 135 is an undoubted case of temporary immediacy but its foundations are apparently past observations of utility. I in 140 and I and IV in 129 may be immediate, but they may also be explained as due to the use of the eudaemonistic standard.

The view that all the members of this group are cases of the eudaemonistic standard rises, however, it seems to me, from a mere possibility to the status of an overwhelming probability when they are considered in relation to the whole of which they form a part. Data, written and oral, have been supplied by one hundred and two students (omitting number 137—see page 32 on the ground of the incompleteness of the examination). Of these, as we have seen, seventy-five supply at least three eudaemonistic answers. In twenty-five of these there are four eudaemonistic answers and in seventeen, five. Only three of these records contain more than one non-mediated rigoristic answer, and in each of these three one of the two, though not classed as eudaemonistic, is almost certainly so in fact. Of the remaining seventeen sets of replies fourteen contain two eudaemonistic answers and never more than one non-mediated rigoristic answer. They form a group not investigated by means of the interview, because it did not seem worth while. Two (43 and 136) are certainly using the eudaemonistic standard throughout, though in each it required more or less use of the leading question to bring this fact out. Finally, one (140) has two eudaemonistic answers, while the other

three answers had to be left in a more or less hazy condition. Of the total of five hundred answers, only eleven were discovered that had even a *prima facie* claim to immediacy, and the plausibility of even this modest claim is in many instances, as we have just seen, to say the least, doubtful. A record of this sort seems to me open to but one interpretation.

Two facts not as yet mentioned supply confirmatory evidence of the validity of the inferences which we have drawn from these data. In the latitudinarian answers to I only two persons attempt to justify their attitude by saying, "Not to take the bread would be murder." Yet on the theory under investigation, this is the only "reason" that could be assigned. It is true that a small number, but *only* a small number, put the matter thus: "It would be worse to let them starve than to steal." But whether this was intended as the equivalent of the preceding, I am unable to state.

In February, 1906, as has already been said, a second series of questions was given out to those who had answered the first set. Among them was the following, which was designed primarily to throw light upon the nature and distribution of the aesthetic standard: At the burning of Moscow in 1812, two guards at the royal palace were in the confusion forgotten and the order to relieve them was not given. They therefore remained at their post and were buried under the burning timbers. Was it their duty to remain when they knew there was nothing left to guard? If not strictly their duty would you think less of them for making their escape?

The great majority of those who answered this question took the opportunity to place themselves on record as explicitly denying the position which, according to the thorough-going adherents of the custom theory, common sense takes, by asserting that a sacrifice which does not result in compensating good is immoral. The following answer, though more comprehensive and more clearly formulated than most of the others, is nevertheless, in the spirit that it exhibits, thoroughly typical: "It was not their duty to remain and I should think no less of them for having left their posts. Indeed, it seems to me that they used no judgment at all. No matter what position a man may hold, circumstances alter his duty, and he must use his

judgment, not go blindly by some rule whatever the circumstances. It is never a man's duty to give his life or risk it, unless by doing so he does some good—helps a good cause, for example."

The study of the moral judgments of these students seems to me to point to the conclusion that the difference in kind which many philosophers imagine to exist between their own moral judgments and those of common sense is non-existent. Problems such as we have been discussing they would doubtless say belong, objectively considered, under the eudaemonistic standard. But that the "herd" are capable of seeing this, or at any rate that they do see it, is denied. Our data seem to show that, on the contrary, the "herd" use the same standards as the philosopher. The point of view may often be partial or one-sided, phases of the situation which are of the utmost importance may at times be overlooked. But *in essence* the process is the same for learned and unlearned, the wise man and the fool. Many objections can, of course, be urged against drawing such conclusions from the facts supplied in this chapter. These objections can, however, be best considered when we have the data before us in their totality. I will therefore ask the reader to suspend judgment till we reach the fifth chapter when they will be discussed at length.